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JUN 13 2003  
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IN THE CLAIMS

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JUN 17 2003

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Please amend claims 31-33, 35, 37, 39 and 45 as follows:

31. (Currently amended) A synthetic peptide comprising a regulatory virus protein R (Vpr) of the human immunodeficiency virus type 1(HIV-1) (SEQ ID NO: 1), or a fragment or variant thereof, wherein the fragment or variant thereof consists of a peptide selected from the group consisting of:

(a) a 20 amino acid Vpr protein (sVpr<sup>1-20</sup> or sVpr<sup>21-40</sup>; SEQ ID NO: 8 and 9, respectively);

(b) a 47 amino acid N-terminal peptide (sVpr<sup>1-47</sup>);

(c) a 49 amino acid long C-terminal peptide (sVpr<sup>48-96</sup>); or

(d) a fragment of at least 15 amino acids of any one of (a)-(c).

32. (Currently amended) ~~A fragment of the~~ The synthetic peptide of claim 31, consisting of sVpr<sup>1-96</sup> (SEQ ID NO: 1) ~~a peptide selected from the group consisting of:~~

(a) ~~a 20 amino acid Vpr protein (sVpr<sup>1-20</sup> or sVpr<sup>21-40</sup>; SEQ ID NO: 8 and 9, respectively);~~

(d) ~~a 47 amino acid N-terminal peptide (sVpr<sup>1-47</sup>);~~

(e) ~~a 49 amino acid long C-terminal peptide (sVpr<sup>48-96</sup>); or~~

(f) ~~a fragment of at least 15 amino acids of any one of (a)-(c).~~

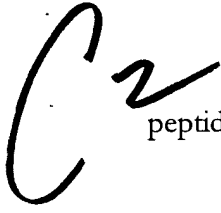
33. (Currently amended) The synthetic peptide ~~fragment~~ of claim 32 ~~31~~, wherein the fragment consists of:

- (a) sVpr<sup>11-25</sup> (SEQ ID NO: 4);
- (b) sVpr<sup>41-55</sup> (SEQ ID NO: 5);
- (c) sVpr<sup>46-60</sup> (SEQ ID NO: 6); or
- (d) sVpr<sup>56-70</sup> (SEQ ID NO: 7).

34. (Previously added) The synthetic peptide of claim 31 bound to a second molecule, wherein the second molecule comprises a DNA or protein molecule.

35. (Currently amended) The synthetic peptide ~~fragment~~ of claim 32 bound to a second molecule, wherein the second molecule comprises a DNA or protein molecule.

36. (Previously added) A pharmaceutical composition comprising the synthetic peptide of claim 31 and a pharmaceutically acceptable carrier.

 37. (Currently amended) A pharmaceutical composition comprising the synthetic peptide ~~fragment~~ of claim 32 and a pharmaceutically acceptable carrier.

38. (Previously added) A pharmaceutical composition comprising the synthetic peptide of claim 34 and a pharmaceutically acceptable carrier.

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39. (Currently amended) A pharmaceutical composition comprising the synthetic peptide ~~fragment~~ of claim 35 and a pharmaceutically acceptable carrier.

40. (Previously added) A method of producing synthetic peptides derived from the regulatory virus protein R (Vpr) of HIV-1, the method comprising:

- (a) synthesizing C-terminal Vpr peptides on a serine resin; and
- (b) synthesizing N-terminal Vpr peptides on a polystyrene polyoxyethylene resin;

wherein chain elongation of the peptides is performed using fluoromethyloxycarbonyl (Fmoc) protection.

41. (Previously added) The method of claim 40, further comprising:


(c) cleaving protection groups using a cleavage mixture comprising 95% trifluoroacetic acid (TFA), 3% triisopropylsilane and 2-5% ethyandithiol.

42. (Previously added) The method of claim 40, further comprising purifying the peptides by HPLC on a column of silica gel using a linear gradient of TFA and water in acetonitrile.

43. (Previously added) A synthetic Vpr peptide produced by the method of claim 40.

44. (Previously added) A biological assay system comprising a synthetic peptide of claim 31 immobilized on a substrate.

45. (Currently amended) A biological assay system comprising a peptide ~~fragment~~ of claim 32 immobilized on a substrate.

 46. (Previously added) The biological assay system of claim 44, which comprises an ELISA.

47. (Previously added) The biological assay system of claim 45, which comprises an ELISA.

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